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Senate

The Senate met at 2 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TODD YOUNG, a Senator from the State of Indiana.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Almighty God, from the rising of the Sun to the coming of the evening, we lift Your Name in grateful praise.

Surround our lawmakers with the power of Your presence, sustaining them in their challenging world. Lord, strengthen them to do what is right so that our Nation will be exalted by Your love. Empower them to treat one another with respect and honor. Teach them to hate what is evil and to cling to what is good. Remind them of how fleeting are the days of their lives as You give them the wisdom to prepare for eternity.

Eternal Father, we exalt You and praise Your Name, for in perfect faithfulness You continue to expose us to the unfolding of Your loving providence.

We pray in Your marvelous Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. HATCH).

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, May 8, 2017.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TODD YOUNG, a Senator from the State of Indiana, to perform the duties of the Chair.

ORRIN G. HATCH,
President pro tempore.

Mr. YOUNG thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to consider the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Heather Wilson, of South Dakota, to be Secretary of the Air Force.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, there will be 4 hours of debate, equally divided in the usual form.

Who yields time?

If no one yields time, time will be charged equally to both sides.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The majority leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, today the Senate will move to confirm Heather Wilson as Secretary of the Air Force. Wilson is a Rhodes Scholar, Air

Force Academy graduate—part of the third class ever to admit women, by the way—and a dedicated public servant who served several terms in the U.S. House.

I am sure she will work hard in this new role to strengthen the branch of the military she cares so much about. I look forward to approving her nomination on a bipartisan basis later this afternoon.

After that, we will take a cloture vote on the Gottlieb nomination to head the FDA, which I will come to in a moment. I hope to see robust support for his nomination as well.

HEALTHCARE LEGISLATION

Mr. President, I would like to recognize two important votes that occurred last Thursday. First, let me commend the House for voting to move beyond the pain of ObamaCare. For years, the American people have suffered under this failed law. They watched their premiums soar. They watched their choices dwindle.

Now they are watching as ObamaCare collapses all around them. More than half of our States have counties with only a single insurance option on the exchanges, and a growing number could have no options at all—like, as we saw reported just last week, in nearly every single county in Iowa. That means thousands more Americans could be left trapped, forced by law to purchase ObamaCare insurance but left without the means to do so. Does that sound like a law that is working to anyone?

To those who would try to defend an indefensible status quo, I ask you to consider what Speaker RYAN said last week:

[T]here is a fundamental and urgent choice at the heart of this debate. We can continue with the status quo under ObamaCare, and we know what that looks like. It means even higher premiums, even fewer choices, even more insurance companies pulling out, even more uncertainty, and even more chaos.

• This “bullet” symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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